

Thursday Scholarship Series

Vladimir

Orloff cello

Patricia

Parr piano

Dec.
2,
1976

8:30 pm

Edward
Johnson
Building

Walter Hall
Faculty of Music

University of Toronto

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata In D Major
Allegro
Adagio
Minuetto

Pietro Locatelli

Pietro Locatelli, born in Bergamo in 1695, was one of a number of composer-violinists who studied with Correlli and later amplified his master's modest technical demands, influencing violin playing throughout Europe. As the English historian Burney put it, Locatelli had "more hand, caprice, and fancy, than any violinist of his time", although he adds somewhat sourly that his music "excites more surprise than pleasure". As far as is known he wrote no sonatas for cello and the work which is being played this evening is an arrangement by Alfredo Piatti of movements from the op. VI violin sonatas; the Allegro and Minuetto from the 6th sonata of that set, the Adagio from the 12th.

The first movement is an interesting example of a preclassical sonata form. The melodic material is worked out in a typically baroque manner by a process of continuous expansion yet the formal design has all the basic ingredients of a classic sonata; a clear move to the dominant key, with a contrasted theme, a modest development of section, and a purposefully prepared return to D Major for a restatement of the opening section. The Adagio, a binary movement in D minor, is notable for its fine cantabile melody and for the elaborate solo cadenzas with which each section ends.

The third and final movement is a set of variations on a simple minuet theme. The variations follow a well-tried pattern--that of increasingly elaborate and virtuosic decoration of the original melody--and the modern performer, no less than his 18th century predecessor, must command "hand, caprice, and fancy". We may be less easily surprised than Burney by such displays but let us hope we are not immune to the pleasure they afford.

Sonata in B^b Major Op. 71

Dimitri Kabalevski

Andante

Allegro

Allegro molto

This sonata, completed in 1962 and dedicated to the great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, poses few problems for the listener since Kabalevski's style speaks directly, based as it is upon a clear sense of tonality, rhythmic drive, and a gift for lyrical writing. Any composer who sets out to write a sonata for cello and piano must come to grips with a number of purely technical matters, one of the most immediate being to insure that the piano writing does not overpower the deeply expressive, but easily hidden, lower register of the cello. Brahms solved the problem to perfection in his E minor sonata and there is more than a hint of that composition in the first movement of the present work, which opens with a long, slowly climbing cello theme against a steady chordal pulse in the piano. The austerity of this section contrasts strongly with the second theme, a more obviously song-like melody. The development is based to a great extent on short rhythmic motifs from the opening theme, now transformed into an energetic Allegro, and the recapitulation is varied with the piano alone taking the beginning of the second theme.

The second movement is a waltz with an infectious, cabaret-tinged melody which makes much use of the simple four note turn with which it begins. This melody only emerges gradually from a mysterious introduction and it is interrupted a number of times during the course of the movement leaving a strange feeling of uneasiness.

The last movement is a toccata, dominated by the insistent 8th note figuration with which the piano begins and which is later taken up by the cello. Contrast is provided by a slower moving melody in the cello and later by a rhythmically active theme incorporating triplets and a brisk dotted motif. After a virtuosic climax the last movement subsides gently into a reminiscence of the opening page of the sonata.

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Sonata in A Major

César Franck

- Allegretto ben moderato
- Allegro
- Recitative-Fantasia
- Allegretto-poco mosso

Cellists are not by nature envious creatures but one may sympathize entirely if on occasion they turn covetous eyes towards the repertoire of their violinist colleagues. In the case of the Franck sonata there is at least the possibility that the composer may have sanctioned performance on the cello; Casals (admittedly not a completely impartial witness) recalls that Ysaye had told him that Franck said the work could be played on either violin or cello. Whatever the truth of the matter the sonata sounds well on the larger instrument, and only the most miserly of violinists could begrudge such a performance of what is possibly Franck's greatest work.

The first movement is simple in design; the exposition and recapitulation of a sonata movement with a short transition in place of development. The two main themes are clearly differentiated, the first being given to the cello--a gently undulating melody with a persistent play on the interval C-C#--and the second to the piano. This movement is relatively short and acts as a prologue to the whole work. The first theme proves to be of particular importance since Franck uses it, in various transformations, to bind together the four movements of the sonata. One such transformation occurs in the stormy Allegro at the point where the piano's ostinato 16th note rhythm ceases for the first time.

The third movement is rather like a written out improvisation and falls into three sections; a first, recitative-like with use of the solo cello, a second more impassioned, and a third with a slow moving cello melody accompanied by triplet figures in the piano. The last movement needs little commentary since it contains some of Franck's best known music, and what is surely one of the most memorable examples of canon ever to have been written.

John Mayo

NEXT EVENT: University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Sunday, December 5, 1976, 8:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre.

NEXT THURSDAY SCHOLARSHIP SERIES CONCERT: January 20, 1977.